

Exhibit B

Project Veritas Video Was a ‘Coordinated Disinformation Campaign,’ Researchers Say

The timing of the deceptive video, which accuses Ilhan Omar of voter fraud, indicates that several conservatives, including Donald Trump Jr., may have known about it in advance.



By Maggie Astor

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A deceptive video released on Sunday by the conservative activist James O’Keefe, which claimed through unidentified sources and with no verifiable evidence that Representative Ilhan Omar’s campaign had collected ballots illegally, was probably part of a coordinated disinformation effort, according to researchers at Stanford University and the University of Washington.

Mr. O’Keefe and his group, Project Veritas, appear to have made an abrupt decision to release the video sooner than planned after The New York Times published a sweeping investigation of President Trump’s taxes, the researchers said. They also noted that the timing and metadata of a Twitter post in which Mr. Trump’s son shared the video suggested that he might have known about it in advance.

Project Veritas had hyped the video on social media for several days before publishing it. In posts amplified by other prominent conservative accounts, Mr. O’Keefe teased what he said was evidence of voter fraud, and urged people to sign up at “ballot-harvesting.com” to receive the supposed evidence when it came out. (None of the material in the video actually proved voter fraud.)

Mr. O’Keefe’s promotional posts had said the video would be released on Monday, but Project Veritas released it on Sunday instead, a few hours after the publication of The Times’s investigation. The researchers concluded that this timing was unlikely to be a coincidence “given the huge marketing about a 9/28 release date,” they wrote in an analysis that Alex Stamos, who led the research team at the Stanford Internet Observatory, shared with The Times.

“It’s a great example of what a coordinated disinformation campaign looks like: pre-seeding the ground and then simultaneously hitting from a bunch of different accounts at once,” Mr. Stamos said.

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Many of the same accounts that had shared promotional tweets also shared the video as soon as it was released, moving it quickly into Twitter’s trending topics alongside The Times’s tax investigation.

Roughly an hour after The Times published its article, Mike Lindell, chief executive of MyPillow and honorary chairman of Mr. Trump’s Minnesota campaign, tweeted a video of himself saying that Project Veritas’s supposed exposé would be released that night at 9 p.m. Eastern time.

“I just met James O’Keefe of Project Veritas, and James showed me footage of systematic voter fraud,” Mr. Lindell said. He did not respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Mr. O’Keefe posted the video on Twitter at 9 p.m. on the dot, and the president’s son Donald Trump Jr. tweeted it just seven minutes later. Two minutes after that, the president’s “war room” account retweeted him, and the president himself soon began commenting.

Notably, the video that the younger Mr. Trump posted did not have the “from James O’Keefe” label that appeared when other Twitter users shared the video uploaded by Mr. O’Keefe.

“This detail, along with video metadata demonstrating that the Donald Trump Jr. version of the video was separately uploaded and re-encoded by Twitter, indicates that the Trump campaign possibly had access to the video before the general public and raises questions of coordination,” the Stanford and University of Washington researchers wrote, noting also that Mr. Trump posted the video on Facebook 10 minutes before Mr. O’Keefe posted it there.

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Asked for comment, the Trump campaign said that Donald Trump Jr. had received a downloadable link to the video after it was publicly released. It did not comment on Mr. Lindell's post or on the timing of the video's release, and a spokesman for the younger Mr. Trump did not respond to a request for comment.

The video contains footage of a man, identified as Liban Mohamed, showing off ballots he says he has collected for a Minneapolis City Council candidate — something that, depending on when the video was filmed, may not have been illegal, because a district court judge in July temporarily suspended Minnesota's ban on third parties collecting and returning large numbers of completed ballots. Mr. Mohamed was not working for Ms. Omar.

The video then claims that Democratic operatives connected to Ms. Omar's campaign paid voters to hand over blank mail-in ballots and filled them out. This would be illegal, but the allegations come solely from unnamed people who speak with Project Veritas operatives in the video and whose faces are not shown.

On Monday, the Minneapolis Police Department said it was "looking into the validity" of the claims in the video, which a spokesman for Ms. Omar described as "a coordinated right wing effort to delegitimize a free and fair election."

Mr. O'Keefe and Project Veritas have a long history of releasing manipulated or selectively edited footage purporting to show illegal conduct by Democrats and liberal groups.

The researchers reported the video to multiple social media platforms. Facebook added a link to its "voting information center" to one upload of the video but placed no notice on the original upload. Twitter, YouTube and Reddit took no action. TikTok was the only platform that removed all uploads of the video.